

It's Hard to Wait (If You're In Love) by orphan_account

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Summary:

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Author's Note:

I haven't really written anything in awhile and these boys have my heart in a choke hold

He's been getting closer to him, and it was starting to hurt.

Mike biked his way to the Byers household, feeling his fogged warm breath hitting his reddened face. His mom pestered him a little, telling him that if he gets a cold she'll kill him. *You'll kill me if I get sick? That's a little harsh.* He replied, sliding into his dark green coat over himself. His mom forcefully shoved a hat onto his head and pushed him out the door "Have fun! Be back before eleven-thirty!" she called to him.

Have fun. Yeah, right.

It's not like he didn't want to go to Wills; that was the problem. He was getting too close to him. As he peddled down the familiar road, he couldn't help wondering what it meant. How could he get too close to his best friend? He shook his head at the feeling the thought gave him. He didn't want to answer. He didn't know what would happen to him if he even thought about the answer. He felt as if he was at the end of a cliff, the top of his toes curling into the edge, and he knew if he thought about falling, he would. And it would be over for him. So Mike tried not to think about it.

It was so loud, though.

When he got to his best friend's house and knocked on the door and saw his friend, who gave him a soft smile and let him inside the warm house, it got louder. They walked to where the chunky TV was at wordlessly and Mike sat on the floor with his legs crossed as Will pushed in his favorite episode of Star Wars and sat next to him.

"You're still wearing your hat." Will said, and tugged it off Mike's

head. Mike laughed a little and soon after so did Will.

Something light fluttered in the front of his chest when Will leaned into him after awhile, he could feel his heart go faster in his stomach and he was kind of freaking out. What was wrong with him? He hasn't felt like this before, not even with Eleven.

Eleven.

He tried to think about her. She strictly went by Jane now, 'El' being the only compromise for a nickname. Dustin started calling her JJ because, 'It sounds more badass.' Jane agreed to the nickname and it was all good after that. She was happy. Mike and Jane stopped dating after a couple months because Jane genuinely didn't really understand how relationships worked. By all she gathered, she only noticed that the difference between dating and being friends was kissing and holding hands. And while she loved that, she did that with everyone. Jane became a very affectionate person, particularly towards Dustin and Will. She just didn't see the point in dating. It hurt for awhile, but it wasn't awkward. Mike accepted it. When they were dating, Mike's heart didn't drop to his stomach the way it did now and he didn't like it. He loved El, differently, but not less.

During Star Wars, after Leah kissed Luke and she stormed off, when Luke gave Han a smug look, Will wholeheartedly laughed. Mike couldn't handle it. He realized, taking a step off the cliff, that he loved him.

It was a thought he didn't think about, it was something that just came to him. He suddenly felt fuzzy inside, like every part of him was buzzing with the revelation. He felt happy.

The next thing he felt was fear. He wasn't supposed to feel about his friend. Nonetheless his male friend. Nonetheless his ex's step-brother! He felt like a mess. He became hyper-aware of every part of Will that was next to him. Will's head was resting on his shoulder, his hands clasped together resting on his own stomach. He was so focused on the movie he's seen at least twenty times. He had the ghost of a smile on his face as he watched. Mike realized he was staring at him when Will turned to look at him. Their faces were so close. Mike had a fleeting thought that he should kiss him.

“Are you okay?” He said, his voice cracking from not speaking for awhile. Mike nodded and turned back to the clump of light grey that was playing a scene Mike couldn’t care less about.

Will wasn’t like him, Mike thought, Will wasn’t queer.

Mike realized he was wrong. Two years later.

Will was seventeen when he came out. It was so fast someone wouldn’t catch it if he was saying anything else.

“Mom, Jonathan, Hopper, and Jane are the only ones who know. Now you all know.” He said, his eyes toward the floor. Mike couldn’t breathe.

Two years he’s been pining for Will. Two years (and probably more, if Mike really thinks about it) he was telling himself no, he can’t ask that, he can’t look at him that way. Two years Will might’ve been thinking the same thing, his mind hoped of him to think. He couldn’t.

He couldn’t tell him. He wasn’t ready.

He smiled and opened his arms for the boy he cared for so much “I’m proud of you, man!” he said honestly. Mike should’ve known he’d never be as brave as Will Byers. The others joined in, including Steve, who had become a side member of the party and an unexpected amazing friend. It was bittersweet, because Will started to cry a little. They were happy tears.

“Is that why you haven’t dated anyone all these years?” Lucas asked him, with a wide smile plastered on his face.

Will nodded “Yeah, I guess.”

“Don’t worry, Will, You’ll find a boyfriend in no time.” Jane.

Mike, again, couldn’t breathe.

It was one thing pining over someone you think is straight, and another to pine over someone you know is gay but is dating someone. Big difference. Almost too much. He couldn’t blame his hesitance Will’s sexuality anymore. He was just a coward.

Mike would say ‘the worst part’, but this entire situation was always the worst part. The new addition to Mike’s turmoil and dread was that Jane was right. Will didn’t take long to get a boyfriend.

Will deserves to be happy. He deserves to have a loving boyfriend that cared for him. Mike knew this, he felt it in his heart when he thought it, but it still stung when he saw them together.

His name was Connor, and he was nice.

The thing about Hawkins is that it was a small town, there were only a handful of gay people and an even smaller handful of gay people that were Will’s age and an infant sized handful of people Will would even consider. Connor was practically a miracle of life. Mike begrudgingly really liked Connor. He was funny, kind, and almost as big as a nerd as the rest of the party. He could be a little judgmental and a shut-in most of the times though. Mike held it against him as much as he could, which wasn’t enough for him to completely despise the guy. He was pretty handsome too, the only unflattering thing on his face being his big nose and a crazy amount of freckles. He had warm brown eyes matched with lemon colored hair that made him stick out like a fire at times. Mike thinks that if they were younger and played hide and seek in the dark, it would be easy to find him.

Mike was lucky that they weren’t affectionate in public or the party besides holding hands, which they never really did until Max pointed it out.

“We didn’t want to make you guys feel weird, is all.” Connor said with a sad smile.

Max and the rest of the party scoffed, disagreeing heavily with him.

Will looked at Mike for reassurance, and Mike couldn’t help but feel a pang of guilt

“Seriously, you can hold hands. You’re safe here.” Mike said quietly, as if to only say it to Will. In a way, he kind of did.

On Will and Connor’s seventh month anniversary, Mike spent most of

his time in his room. He didn't want to see them together. He liked them being happy, he really did (If he was being honest, he was mostly happy seeing Will happy), but it was getting overwhelming.

Mike realized that it was eating at him when he started looking at his grades. His mom noticed, and tried to talk to him, but he never said anything to her. It sucked, it really did, but it mostly just hurt.

He wanted to tell someone at least about his sexuality crisis where he finds himself at. *Seriously, why be attracted to both boys and girls? Who is that good for?* He would always find asking himself dumbly. He thought about who he would tell, but he can't imagine telling anyone but Will. He couldn't do that.

Mike thought about it for awhile. Who did he trust the most? That was the impossible question, and it became 'Who wouldn't judge you and keep it a secret?' and it came to him.

Jane. He needed to tell Jane.

He threw himself out of bed and changed his clothes faster than he thought humanly possible. He knew it had to be later in the day, because he had spent most the night reading a random book for an English assignment. He threw on a zip-up sweater over himself before hastily digging his bike out and pedaling as hard as he could until he became very out of breath.

What was he even going to say? That he was... Two-sexual or something? He scoffed a laugh. Two-sexual. There has to be an actual name for it, right? Right? Mike discarded the thought. There's no way he's the only one.

He rode up to the Byer's house where Jane and Hopper now lived for about two and a half years. She shared a room with Will until Jonathan moved out when he was 19 and moved to New York where he went to his dream university. Mike flopped his bike onto the ground and stood in front of the door. He could feel his blood pumping in his ears as he cracked his knuckles nervously and hesitated to knock. He ignored and shoved down whatever thoughts

that were about to spring up, and knocked.

He should've known Will was going to open the door, because the universe hates him personally.

"Hey, Mike! What're you doing here?" Will said cheerfully, though his eyes were confused.

Mike cursed at himself that he didn't just climb through El's window "I gotta talk to Jane." He tried to say normally, but it came out strangely.

Will frowned and let him in "You okay?" he asked him easily. Why does he always ask that? Why does it make Mike's face feel like it's on fire when he does?

"Yeah! Yeah, I'm fine." Mike said nonchalantly.

He noticed Connor was in the kitchen with a few books around him. They must be studying, Mike thought. His heart felt heavier when he realized that Will used to study with him, and he doesn't anymore. He probably gets better grades now, Mike self-deprecated.

"She's in her room. You sure you're good? We can talk, you know." Will reassured, stopping Mike from walking to Jane's room by putting a hand on his chest and turning him towards himself.

Mike wondered if Will could feel his increasing heartbeat "I know, Will." He said. Mike knew he shouldn't have looked in his eyes, but he did anyway. He looked worried. "You're too much like your mom sometimes." Mike said with a smile, and Will let him go with a face of confusion. Connor waved at Mike and turned back to his books.

Jane's door was wide open, as it always was. It could be a metaphor as it was literal. Mike let himself inside where Jane was sitting on her bed with a Barbie, braiding its hair. Jane loved those things. At first Mike thought it weird for someone her age, but soberly remembered that she didn't get to have a childhood-- so it was fine.

Jane looked up and sat the Barbie next to her "Hi?" She questioned 'why are you here?' it said.

Mike looked around the room and closed the door (not all the way, he remembers) “I need to talk to you.”

Jane scooted over and patted to a spot next to her. She grabbed a fuzzy elastic and pulled her hair back into a ponytail with it. She loved doing things with her hair even if it was pointless, her curls would end up eating whatever she tried to put in it until Nancy showed her different oils and products that she could put in her hair, and she fell in love ever since. It made sense. She never really got to have hair before. It was a heartbreaking amount of things Jane never got to experience. Mike wonders how she hasn't gone crazy from anger.

He sat next to her and fiddled with his thumbs “Jane, I-I think there's something you should know.”

She looked up at him intensely.

“I like girls...” He took a deep breath “And boys.”

Nothing.

Mike looked up, and Jane kept looking at him.

She slouched forward “And?” she asked him nonchalantly. As if he stated the weather.

Mike's jaw dropped “It's kind of a pretty big deal, El.”

“Will's gay,” Jane shrugged “I still love him the same, I still love you the same.”

Mike swallowed a lump in his throat “I love him.” He didn't mean to say that. He didn't mean to say that. His chest filled with dread and he clenched onto the scratchy sheets he was sitting on.

She whipped her face around to him “What.” She said harshly

Where did that come from? It can't be that big of a shock, Mike thought. He loved him forever; it had to be obvious at this point. *What if she tells him? What if he hates me?*

“Well, yeah.” Mike said moronically “For, like, years.”

Jane slapped her face into her hands “Oh my god.” She said with a crazed laugh “Oh my god.”

“N-Not when we were together, if that’s what you’re—“

“No! Oh my god. Mike. Stop.” She sat up and breathed slowly “How long?”

“I-I” Mike stuttered, baffled. What the fuck?

“How long!?” She tapped on his shoulder. She looked crazy. It was kind of funny.

Mike searched the room to find something to take him out of his misery “Before you and Hopper moved here.”

Jaw-slacked, Jane looked at her ceiling in utter defeat “You couldn’t have said this earlier?” She asked the roof, kind of mad at God for putting her into this situation.

Mike was at a loss for words “What’re you talking about?”

“Why did you wait so long? He’s happy, Mike!” Jane nearly cried, careful to keep her voice quiet “Do you realize how long he’s been—fuck.” She swore, which was extremely rare for her to do.

Okay, Mike was confused for most of his life but this... This was on his top five list, just below the Upside Down and everything that goes with it “Jane, what are you talking about—“

“He had a massive crush on you, Mike.” She threw her hands in the air, shaking her head at a loss.

The more she thought about it, the more frustrated she became “*Jee-zus!*” she exclaimed

“Blasphemy!” a voice called back. Jane swatted at it.

“You’re lying.” Mike hysterically said “Please tell me you’re lying.”

Jane shook her head sadly “I wouldn’t lie to you, Mike. Especially not about this.”

Mike’s eyes fogged up. He missed out. It was his fault. He missed out on the best thing in his life because he was too much of a coward “I’m so dumb. I’m so stupid.”

Jane looked at him sympathetically, and wrapped her arms around him. She placed his head on her chest in the same way Hopper did years ago and held him tightly “You’re not stupid.”

She was always such a good hugger “I love him so much, El.” Don’t cry. Don’t cry. Don’t cry.

Jane rubbed her thumb soothingly against his back “I know,” She whispered “I know.”

“Whenever he looks at me, It’s like...” He swallowed another lump in his throat “It just makes me want to make him happy. He’s happy now, and that’s all I want, but...”

“You want to be the reason he’s happy.” She said softly “I understand.”

“You do?” He lifts his head slightly to look at her.

“I haven’t been through it myself, but I understand.” She assures, and lets him go “Are you going to be okay?”

Mike shook his head “I don’t know.” He whispered.

Jane pushed his shoulder back so he looked at her “Don’t let this ruin you.” She ordered.

Mike smiled and sniffled “You’re an amazing friend, you know that?”

“I know.” She deadpanned “Can I braid your hair?”

Mike huffed “After that? I’d let you dye it purple.”

Jane pointed to a spot on the floor and Mike sat there expectantly. Jane sat above him on her bed and grabbed a small plastic bag the

shape of a pierogi filled with hair elastics. She started by brushing his hair.

“Ow!” Mike winced as she roughly brushed out a knot.

“Sorry,” She said. Mike could tell by the tone of her voice that she was anything but sorry, and he smiled. Maybe the universe isn’t personally out to get him.

Ever since his confession to El, she’d give him knowing glances whenever Will’s smile was too bright at Connor, or whenever they kissed (It took them awhile to do this, and the first time they did, Max cheered. Jane just looked at Mike.), and while Mike was thankful for it, he was scared someone would notice. Nobody ever really did, except Max.

Max was strangely super accepting and watched out for them, she said it was because they’re supposed to be safe with the party, no matter in what way. It was nice, but it lead her to notice if anyone had a negative reaction to Will and Connor, and she would often confront anyone who did. Mike wasn’t surprised that he was chosen for the confrontation, but it didn’t make it easier.

“What’s up with you?” she asked him one evening, when nearly everyone has gone home. He didn’t look at her.

Mike felt lucky El was still there “Nothing.”

Max looked at Jane for something, but she shrugged “Really? Because anytime Will and Connor—“

“Max.” Jane interrupted her “Don’t.”

She looked at the two of them and faltered. She pushed her ginger hair behind her ear the way she does when she feels insecure “Why?” she asked concernly.

Mike’s head was still looking down, and he turned away from her “I can’t tell you.”

“Are you--? Whatever.” She huffed and walked away. Mike breathed out in relief.

“That was risky.” Jane told him. Mike agreed.

A year later, Mike got the best news he’d heard in a long time.

“Mike, this is Jane. It’s important. Over.”

Mike sighed and sat up at the end of his bed, grabbing his walkie and bringing it too close to his mouth as he always did “I’m here. Over.”

“Will and Connor broke up. He’s in the other room, I think this is the time.” Jane’s voice said through the static of the machine. Mike felt like he was floating. They broke up. Giddily, he screamed happily in his head.

“Jane, are you kidding me? They just broke up, I can’t make a move now.” He said, trying to be realistic “I’m not that much of an asshole. Over.”

Mike could feel Jane rolling her eyes on the other end of the “You don’t even know why they broke up. Over.” She said.

Mike’s heart beat hopefully against his chest “How did they break up? Over.”

“Promise you won’t be mad.”

Mike’s chest quickly fell from hopeful into anxious “Promise. Over.”

Jane sighed “I told him that you loved him for four years? Over.”

Mike’s heart dropped.

“You told him I loved him.” Mike blankly said “What did he say?”

“He still likes you, Mike.” He could hear her smile.

This was too much. His heart was pulsating through his fingertips “Oh my god, El.” is all he could manage.

“Come over.”

He slammed the antenna into the brick of the walkie talkie

Mike's biked fast before, he'd race Dustin and Lucas whenever he was given the chance, but he never biked as fast as he did now, or at least it seemed that way. He pedaled until his heart felt like it was going to stop; gripped onto the handlebars and breathed out the November air, nothing but this was important. There was nothing that could make Mike turn his bike around

He nearly crashed into the house. He didn't care. He took a second to gather his breath, and opened the door of his best friend's house. The boy he loved. The boy that *liked him back*.

Will was pacing on the kitchen floor, and he looked up at him "Mike." He whispered.

Mike swallowed. This was real. This was real. This was real.

Mike slowly walked to Will, who is always shorter than him, and smiled. He raised his hand and cupped Will's reddened face in his hands "Is this okay?" he asked him quietly. Will nodded.

Mike did the thing he wanted to do for what felt like forever, and closed the space between them. It was soft and sweet and Mike felt like he was radiating purple. Will leaned into it and wrapped his arms around his neck, and Mike doesn't think he's ever felt this happy before.

They parted to catch their breaths, and looked at each other, really looked, for the first time in awhile.

"Is it true?" Will asked him, his eyes warm and his cheeks pink "You liked me for four years?"

Mike swallowed thickly "Five." He corrected "Probably more."

Will hugged him "Jeez, Mike." He laughed lightly "That's crazy."

"How long did you like me?"

Will tensed "I, Uh..."

"You don't need to tell me," Mike told him, even if he really wanted to know.

Will shook his head “No, I...” He took a deep breath in “Before the Upside Down.”

Mike loosened the hug so he could look at him “Will, that’s... God.”

How did he manage? How was he so strong? How was he so amazing? His soul ached at the idea of being in pain for that long. It was almost unbearable.

Will looked up at him “I know.”

They looked at each other for awhile to grieve the lost years between them. They could’ve been this happy years ago. It was insane.

Mike huffed “Can I kiss you again?” he asked.

Will answered by kissing him a little harder than before. Mike knows they can never make up lost time, but they sure as hell can try.

Will and Mike kept it a secret for a week. The party freaked when they found out.

“Wait, holy shit, wait.” Dustin said with his eyes closed, mind blown “What?”

“I knew it! I told you, Max! I told you!” Lucas threw his arm around Max

“That’s why you were so weird!” Max pointed at Mike and snapped her fingers

“I’m proud of you guys, you deserve each other.” Steve said and tussled the two boy’s hair.

Jane smiled brightly “You can all thank me.”

“Wait, Mike, are you even gay?” Dustin asked, still confused.

“I like both.” Mike said quietly, his face heating up at the reactions of everyone.

Steve nodded “You’re bisexual?” he asked.

There was a word for it. Mike wasn't alone. He nodded and smiled at Will. His best friend. His boyfriend.

"This just blew my mind." Dustin said, slumping into his chair.

No, the universe isn't out to get him at all, because right now Mike feels more loved than he has in years.

It's louder than it's ever been, and Mike loves listening.